



Safer Recruitment Policy

Last reviewed: September 2023

This document applies to all schools and operations of the Vale Academy Trust. www.vale-academy.org

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy applies to all schools and operations of the Vale Academy Trust ('the Trust'), and to all of its workforce and volunteers.
- 1.2 In this policy, 'we', 'us' and 'our' means the Trust.
- 1.3 This policy has been developed to embed safer recruitment practices and procedures throughout the Trust and to support the creation of a safer culture by reinforcing the safeguarding and well-being of children and young people in our care. We will adopt robust recruitment procedures that deter and prevent people who are unsuitable to work with children from applying for or securing employment, or volunteering opportunities in our Trust. This policy complies with guidance outlined in the Department for Education's Keeping children safe in education 2023. The recruitment steps outlined are based on part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- 1.4 This policy reinforces the expected conduct outlined in our Staff Code of Conduct as well as our Whistleblowing Procedure, both of which are available from Trust and school websites and offices. All staff are expected to be familiar with these documents, and all new successful candidates for paid or volunteer employment will be made aware of them.
- 1.5 This policy is an essential element in creating and maintaining a safe and supportive environment for all pupils, staff and others within the Trust and aims to ensure both safe and fair recruitment and selection of all staff and volunteers by:
- attracting the best possible candidates/volunteers to vacancies
 - deterring prospective candidates/volunteers who are unsuitable from applying for vacancies
 - identifying and rejecting those candidates/volunteers who are unsuitable to work with children and young people
- The Trustees and members will ensure that those involved with the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children and young people have received appropriate safer recruitment training
- 1.6 We are committed to using procedures that deal effectively with those adults who fail to comply with our safeguarding and child protection procedures and practices.

2. Equalities - Consistency of treatment and fairness

- 2.1 The Trust is committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness and will abide by all relevant equality legislation, i.e. Employment Rights Act 1996, Employment Relations Act 1999, Employment Act 2002, Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000, Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002 and Equalities Act 2010/2012.
- 2.2 As a Trust our aim is to attract and retain a diverse range of talent that reflects our community. We will ensure that we make reasonable adjustments and reduce

barriers for people with Protected Characteristics so they are not discriminated against and are given equality of opportunity.

- 2.3 A protected characteristic under the act covers the following: • age • disability • gender reassignment • marriage and civil partnership (for employees) • pregnancy and maternity • race • religion or belief • sex • sexual orientation
- 2.4 We recognise the contribution that people with criminal records can make as employees and volunteers and welcome applications from them. For more information, candidates should refer to the Policy statement on recruiting applicants with criminal records and Criminal record declaration form for jobs exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020.

3. Existing staff

- 3.1 In certain circumstances or if we have concerns about an existing member of staff's suitability to work with children, we will carry out all the relevant checks as if the individual was a new member of staff.

These circumstances are when:

- There are concerns about an existing member of staff's suitability to work with children; or
- An individual moves from a post that is not regulated activity to one that is; or
- There has been a break in service of 12 weeks or more

- 3.2 We will refer to the [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (DBS) anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult where:

- We believe the individual has engaged in [relevant conduct](#); or
- The individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence, or there is reason to believe the individual has committed a listed relevant offence, under the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 \(Prescribed Criteria and Miscellaneous Provisions\) Regulations 2009](#); or
- The 'harm test' is satisfied in respect of the individual (i.e. they may harm a child or vulnerable adult or put them at risk of harm); or
- The individual has been removed from working in regulated activity (paid or unpaid) or would have been removed if they had not left

- 3.3 We will also refer to the DBS an employee following a disciplinary investigation, who is dismissed or resigns because of misconduct towards a pupil and we may refer any concerns we have before the completion of this process

- 3.4 We will refer any teacher to the Secretary of State via the Teacher Regulation Agency if they are dismissed or we cease to use the services of a teacher because of serious misconduct, or we might have dismissed them or ceased to use their services had they not left first.

- 3.5 As an employer we are under a duty to refer any allegation of abuse against a member of staff to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day of the allegation being made. A referral will be made if a teacher or member of staff (including volunteers) has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child or young person, or may have harmed a child or young person
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or young person
- behaved towards a child or young person or children or young people in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children or young people

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The Trust will:

- Ensure we have effective policies and procedures in place for the safe and fair recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers in accordance with Department for Education guidance and legal requirements
- monitor our compliance with them
- ensure that appropriate staff, trustees and governors have completed safer recruitment training (and repeat this every 5 years)
- to ensure that at least one of the persons who conducts an interview has completed safer recruitment training.

4.2 The Chief Executive, HR Director and headteachers will:

- ensure that all schools and operations of the Trust operate safe and fair recruitment and selection procedures which are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect any changes to legislation and statutory guidance
- ensure that all appropriate checks have been carried out on staff and volunteers within the Trust
- monitor any contractors' and agencies' compliance with this document
- promote the safety and well-being of children and young people at every stage of this process

5. Inviting Applications

5.1 When advertising roles, we will make clear:

- Our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and that safeguarding checks will be undertaken.
- The safeguarding requirements and responsibilities of the role, such as the extent to which the role will involve contact with children.
- Whether or not the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020. If the role is exempt, certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected', so they do not need to be disclosed, and if they are disclosed, we cannot take them into account

All advertisements for posts of regulated activity, paid or unpaid, will include the following statement;

"XX School and The Vale Academy Trust are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and preventing extremism. We expect all staff and volunteers to share in this commitment. All post holders in regulated activity are subject to appropriate vetting procedures and a satisfactory "Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Enhanced

Check. Shortlisted candidates will be subject to online searches for publicly available information.

The Vale Academy Trust is an equal opportunities employer and we welcome applications from a range of backgrounds to represent diversity in line with our schools' community."

- 5.2 All applicants will receive website links for the following when applying for a post:
- A statement of our commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of the pupils
 - Job description and person specification; detailing the skills, abilities, experience, attitude, and behaviours required for the post
 - The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, appropriate to the school or operation where the post is based
 - The selection procedure for the post
 - Our Whistleblowing Procedure
 - An application form
 - Our Staff Code of Conduct
 - Our Policy Statement on recruiting applicants with criminal records
- 5.3 Prospective applicants must complete, in full, and return a signed application form. Incomplete application forms will be returned to the applicant where the deadline for completed forms has not passed.
- 5.4 The application form will contain:
- personal details, current and former names, current address and national insurance number; details of their present (or last) employment and reason for leaving
 - full employment history, (since leaving school, including education, employment and voluntary work) including reasons for any gaps in employment;
 - qualifications, the awarding body and date of award;
 - details of referees/references
 - a statement of the personal qualities and experience that the applicant believes are relevant to their suitability for the post advertised and how they meet the person specification
- 5.5 We will check that information provided is not contradictory or incomplete.
- 5.6 Candidates submitting an application form completed on line will be asked to sign the form if called for interview. Our application forms will include a statement saying that it is an offence to apply for the role if an applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children (where the role involves this type of regulated activity)
- 5.7 A curriculum vitae will not be accepted in place of a completed application form.

6. Identification of the Recruitment Panel

- 6.1 At least one member of the Selection and Recruitment Panel will have successfully completed training in safer recruitment within the last 5 years

7. Shortlisting

- 7.1 Our shortlisting process will involve at least 2 people and will:
- Consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them
 - Explore all potential concerns

Once we have shortlisted candidates, we will ask shortlisted candidates to:

- Complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or any information that would make them unsuitable to work with children, so that they have the opportunity to share relevant information and discuss it at interview stage.

The information we will ask for includes:

- If they have a criminal history
- Whether they are included on the barred list
- Whether they are prohibited from teaching
- Information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law as applicable in England and Wales
- Any relevant overseas information
- Sign a declaration confirming the information they have provided is true

- 7.2 Candidates submitting a self-declaration completed on line will be asked to sign the self-declaration.
- 7.3 Candidates will be short listed against the person specification for the post.

8. References

- 8.1 We will seek references on all short-listed candidates, including internal candidates, normally before interview. They will be taken up before the selection stage so that any discrepancies may be probed during this stage of the procedure
- 8.2 We will not accept open references e.g. to whom it may concern or rely on applicants to obtain their references.
- 8.3 We will scrutinise references and resolve any concerns before confirming appointment. The references requested will ask specific questions about the suitability of the applicant to work with children. We will take at least two references, one of which must be from the applicant's current employer.
- 8.4 We will obtain verification of the candidate's most recent relevant period of employment if they are not currently employed.
- 8.5 We will secure a reference from the relevant employer from the last time the candidate worked with children if they are not currently working with children.
- 8.6 The reference must be completed by a senior person with the appropriate authority

(note references that are from a school should come from the head or be confirmed by the headteacher as accurate, not from a colleague).

- 8.7 References will be sought directly from the referee and we will verify any information with the person who provided the reference. We will clarify any anomalies or discrepancies, especially where information provided is vague or insufficient.
- 8.8 Detailed written records will be kept of such exchanges. We will ensure electronic references originate from a legitimate source.
- 8.9 Where necessary, previous employers who have not been named as referees may be contacted in order to clarify any such anomalies or discrepancies. Detailed written records will be kept of such exchanges.
- 8.10 Referees will be asked specific questions about the following:
- The candidate's suitability to work with children and young people
 - Any substantiated allegations
 - Any disciplinary warnings, including time-expired warnings, relating to the safeguarding of children and young people
 - The candidate's suitability for the post, including the candidate's ability and willingness to promote fundamental British values.
 - the reason for the candidate leaving their current or most recent post.
- 8.11 Reference requests will include the following:
- Applicants current post and salary
 - Disciplinary record
- 8.12 All appointments are subject to satisfactory references, vetting procedures and DBS clearance. Any concerns raised will be explored further with referees and taken up with the candidate at interview. We will resolve any concerns before any appointment is confirmed.
- 8.13 We will compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and take up any inconsistencies with the candidate

9. Online search

- 9.1 As part of the shortlisting process we will carry out an online search as part of our due diligence on the shortlisted candidates. The search may identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which the school might want to explore with the applicant at interview.
- 9.2 We will inform shortlisted candidates that we will conduct an online search as part of our due diligence checks in the recruitment process

10. Invitation to Interview

- 10.1 Candidates called to interview will receive:
- A letter confirming the interview and any other selection techniques
 - Details of the interview day including details of the panel members

- Further copy of the person specification
- Details of any tasks to be undertaken as part of the interview process
- The opportunity to discuss the process prior to the interview

10.2 Candidates called to interview will be asked to provide proof of identity and relevant qualifications. Original documents requested are:

- Passport,
- Birth Certificate,
- Driving Licence,
- Marriage Certificate (if appropriate),
- Utility Bill or Bank Statement (issued in the last three months),
- relevant qualifications.

11. The Selection Process

11.1 A range of selection techniques will be determined depending on the nature and duties of the post, but all vacancies will require an interview of short-listed candidates. Where appropriate pupils will be involved in the process.

11.2 Interviews will always be face-to-face, but in exceptional circumstances this may be by video call. Interviews may include additional interview techniques such as observation or exercises.

11.3 Interviewers will:

- probe any gaps in employment, or where the candidate has changed employment or location frequently, and ask candidates to explain this
- Explore any potential areas of concern to determine the candidate's suitability to work with children
- Agree structured questions
- Explore the candidate's reasons for applying for the post and motivations for working with children
- Explore the candidate's skills and asking for examples of experience of working with children which are relevant to the role
- Record all information considered and decisions made

11.4 Candidates will be required to:

- Explain any gaps in employment or frequent changes of employment or location.
- Explain satisfactorily any anomalies or discrepancies in the information available to the panel.
- Self-declare any information that is likely to appear on the DBS disclosure.
- Demonstrate their ability to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people and their ability and willingness to promote fundamental British values

12. Employment Checks

12.1 We will record all information on the checks carried out in the school's single central record (SCR). Copies of these checks, where appropriate, will be held in individuals'

personnel files. We follow requirements and best practice in retaining copies of these checks, as set out below.

13. New staff

13.1 An offer of appointment will be conditional until satisfactory completion of the mandatory pre-employment checks and all successful candidates will be required to:

- Verify their identity, it is best practice to check the name on their birth certificate, where this is available. The document used to verify the successful candidate's identity, right to work and required qualifications will be kept on their personnel file
- Obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS certificate, including barred list information for those who will be engaging in regulated activity (see definition below). We will obtain the certificate before, or as soon as practicable after, appointment, including when using the DBS update service.

We will not keep a copy of the DBS certificate beyond the initial original certificate check unless there is a valid reason for doing so in which case it would not be kept for longer than 6 months from the date it was viewed.

The applicant must show the original paper DBS certificate to their potential employer before they take up post, or as soon as practicable afterwards.

- Obtain a separate barred list check if they will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available
- Verify their mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities
- Verify their right to work in the UK. We will keep a copy of this verification for the duration of the member of staff's employment and for 2 years afterwards
- Verify their professional qualifications, as appropriate
- Ensure they are not subject to a prohibition order if they are employed to carry out teaching work

13.2 Further additional checks will be carried out, as appropriate, on candidates who have lived or worked outside of the UK, including (where relevant):

- For all staff, including teaching positions: [criminal records checks for overseas applicants](#). Criminal records checks or their equivalent overseas police check for any individual who has lived or worked outside the United Kingdom, whether they are a British citizen or not so that any relevant events that occurred outside the UK can be considered.
- For teaching positions: obtaining a letter of professional standing from the professional regulating authority in the country where the applicant has worked. Details of regulatory bodies in the EU/EEA and Switzerland are on the Regulated Professions database or UK Centre for Professional Qualifications.
- Where this information is not available we will look at alternative methods of checking suitability and or undertake a risk assessment that supports informed decision making on whether to proceed with the appointment.

- 13.3 We will check that candidates taking up a management position are not subject to a prohibition from management (known as a Section 128 Check) direction made by the secretary of state. This check applies to:
- CEO and any central post on the Executive Team and senior leadership team
 - Headteachers
 - teaching posts on senior leadership teams
 - teaching posts which carry a departmental head role;
 - support staff posts on a senior leadership team; and
 - we will assess on a case by case basis whether the check should be carried out when appointments are made to teaching and support roles which carry additional responsibilities as the individual's job title is not the determining factor, but whether there are responsibilities which could be considered as 'taking part in management'
 - It also applies to appointments to the Trust's Board of Directors and Local Governing Bodies.
- 13.4 The relevant information is contained in the enhanced DBS disclosure certificate (which we obtain for all posts that amount to regulated activity). It can also be obtained through the Teaching Regulation Agency Teacher Services system. We will use either, or both, methods to obtain this information.
- 13.5 For our schools with pupils aged under 8 we will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under 2018 [Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006](#).
- 13.6 Where we take a decision that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment on the individual's personnel file. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.
- 13.7 "Regulated activity" means a person who will be:
- Responsible, on a regular basis in a Trust setting , for teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children; or
 - Carrying out paid, or unsupervised unpaid, work regularly in a Trust setting where that work provides an opportunity for contact with children; or
 - Engaging in intimate or personal care or overnight activity, even if this happens only once and regardless of whether they are supervised or not
- 13.8 Most staff in a school working with children will be engaging in regulated activity relating to children, in which case an enhanced DBS check which includes children's barred list information, will be required
- 13.9 All checks will be:
- Confirmed in writing
 - Documented and retained on the personnel file
 - Recorded on our Single Central Record
 - Followed up if they are unsatisfactory or if there are any discrepancies in the information received.

13.10 Employment will commence subject to all checks and procedures being satisfactorily completed.

14. Induction

14.1 All staff and volunteers who are new to the Trust will receive information on the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy appropriate to the school or operation where they will be based, and procedures and guidance on safe working practices which would include guidance on acceptable conduct/behaviour. These expectations will form part of new staff members' induction training.

14.2 All successful candidates will undergo a period of induction and will:

- Meet regularly with their induction tutor or their line manager
- Attend appropriate training including generalist child protection training
- receive information on the Code of conduct and any other relevant policies.

15. Trustees, governors and members

- Trustees, governors and members will have an enhanced DBS check without barred list information. But they will have an enhanced DBS check with barred list information if working in regulated activity.
- The Chair of the board will have their DBS check countersigned by the secretary of state.

All proprietors, trustees, local governors and members will also have the following checks:

- A section 128 check (to check prohibition on participation in management under [section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#)).
- Identity check
- Right to work in the UK
- Other checks deemed necessary if they have lived or worked outside the UK

16. Volunteers

We will:

- Never leave an unchecked volunteer unsupervised or allow them to work in regulated activity
- Carry out a risk assessment when deciding whether to seek an enhanced DBS check without barred list information for any volunteers not engaging in regulated activity. We will retain a record of this risk assessment
- Obtain an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for all volunteers who are new to working in "regulated" activity
- For our schools with pupils aged under 8 we will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the [2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006](#). Where we decide that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of

our assessment. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought

17. Visitors

- 17.1 Schools have different types of visitors; those with a professional role e.g. educational psychologists, social workers etc. those connected with the building, grounds maintenance, children's relatives or other visitors attending an activity in school such as a sports day.
- 17.2 For visitors provided via a third party schools should not request DBS checks or barred list checks, or ask to see existing DBS certificates, for visitors such as children's relatives or other visitors attending a sports day.
- 17.3 Headteachers should use their professional judgment about the need to escort or supervise such visitors.
- 17.4 For visitors who are there in a professional capacity check ID and be assured that the visitor has had the appropriate DBS check (or the visitor's employers have confirmed that their staff have appropriate checks).
- 17.5 Whilst external organisations can provide enrich children's education, careful consideration should be given to the suitability of any external organisations.

18. Contractors

- 18.1 We will ensure that any contractor who provides services will have their safeguarding requirements set out in the contract between the organisation and the Trust or School.
- 18.2 We will ensure that any contractor or any employee of the contractor, who is to work at a school or any trust setting has had the appropriate level of DBS check. This will be:
 - An enhanced DBS check with barred list information for contractors engaging in regulated activity
 - An enhanced DBS check, not including barred list information, for all other contractors who are not in regulated activity but whose work provides them with an opportunity for regular contact with children
- 18.3 For contractors engaging in regulated activity we will
 - Check identity on arrival and
 - Enhanced DBS check with barred list check.
- 18.4 For contractors not engaging in regulated activity but whose work provides them with an opportunity for regular contact with children:
 - Check identity on arrival and
 - Enhanced DBS check without barred list check.
- 18.5 We will obtain the DBS check for self-employed contractors.
- 18.6 We will not keep copies of such checks for longer than 6 months.
- 18.7 Under no circumstances should a contractor who has had no checks obtained be allowed to work unsupervised, or engage in regulated activity. The Trust and schools are responsible for determining the appropriate level of supervision depending on the circumstances.

- 18.8 We will check the identity of all contractors and their staff on arrival at Trust premises.
- 18.9 In addition, for our schools with pupils aged under 8, when we use self-employed contractors such as music teachers or sports coaches, we will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the [2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006](#).
- 18.10 Where we decide that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

19. Trainee/student teachers

- 19.1 Where applicants for initial teacher training are salaried by us, we will ensure that all necessary checks are carried out.
- 19.2 Where trainee teachers are fee-funded, we will obtain written confirmation from the training provider that necessary checks have been carried out and that the trainee has been judged by the provider to be suitable to work with children.
- 19.3 In both cases, for our schools with pupils aged under 8, this includes checks to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the [2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006](#).

20. Supply Staff Agency and third-party staff

- 20.1 We will only use those agencies which operate a safer recruitment policy and we will obtain written notification from any agency or third-party organisation that it has carried out the necessary safer recruitment checks that we would otherwise perform, including if the position is regulated then the agency must have obtained an Enhanced DBS check with barred list check.
- 20.2 The Agency must give written notification that the enhanced DBS check has been obtained by either the employment business or another such business.
- 20.3 Where a DBS certificate has disclosed any matter or information, the school must obtain a copy of the certificate from the agency. Any information disclosed as part of the DBS check will be treated confidentially. These agencies should be able to demonstrate that their staff have received appropriate safeguarding training.
- 20.4 We will carry out identity checks when the individual arrives at Trust premises and we will also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made.

21. Staff working in alternative provision settings

21.1 Where we place a pupil with an alternative provision provider, we will obtain written confirmation from the provider that they have carried out the appropriate safeguarding checks on individuals working there that we would otherwise perform.

22. Adults who supervise pupils on work experience

22.1 When organising work experience, we will ensure that policies and procedures are in place to protect children and young people from harm.

22.2 We will also consider whether it is necessary for barred list checks to be carried out on the individuals who supervise a pupil under 16 on work experience. This will depend on the specific circumstances of the work experience, including the nature of the supervision, the frequency of the activity being supervised, and whether the work is regulated activity.

22.3 These considerations would include whether the person providing the supervision to the child on work experience will be:

- unsupervised themselves;
- Providing the work experience frequently (more than three days in a 30 day period, or overnight).

If the person working with the child is unsupervised and the same person is in frequent contact with the child, the work is likely to be regulated activity relating to children. If so, the Trust will ask the employer providing the work experience to ensure that the person providing the instruction or training is not a barred person. However, the Trust is not able to request that the employer obtain an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information for staff supervising children aged 16 to 17 on work experience, unless the work experience takes place in a "specified place", such as a school.

23. Pupils staying with host families

23.1 Where we make arrangements for pupils to be provided with care and accommodation by a host family, to which they are not related (for example, during a foreign exchange visit), we will consider the suitability of the adults in the respective families. These arrangements will be for short periods of less than 28 days

23.2 The responsible adults will be engaging in regulated activity for the period of the stay therefore they will require an enhanced DBS checks with barred list information on those people.

23.3 We will use all the intelligence obtained to determine whether the adults would be a suitable host for a child

23.4 Where we are organising such hosting arrangements overseas and host families cannot be checked in the same way, we will work with our partner schools and organisations abroad to ensure that similar assurances are undertaken prior to the visit.

23.5 The organiser will use their professional judgement to satisfy themselves that the arrangements are appropriate and sufficient to safeguard. They may consider whether it is necessary to contact the relevant foreign embassy or High Commission of the country in question to discuss what checks may be possible in respect of those providing homestay outside of the UK.